



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *ANGELUS* *Saint Peter's Square*

Sunday, 21 June 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In this Sunday's Gospel (cf. Mt 10:26-33) the invitation that Jesus addresses to His disciples resonates: to have no fear, to be strong and confident in the face of life's challenges, as he forewarns them of the adversities that await them. Today's passage is part of the missionary discourse, with which the Teacher prepares the Apostles for their first experience of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus persistently exhorts them to "have no fear". Fear is one of the most terrible enemies of our Christian life. Jesus exhorts: "have no fear", "fear not". And Jesus describes three tangible situations that they will find themselves facing.

First and foremost the hostility of those who would like to stifle the Word of God, by sugar-coating it, watering it down, or by silencing those who proclaim it. In this case, Jesus encourages the Apostles to spread the message of salvation that He has entrusted to them. For the moment, He has transmitted it cautiously, somewhat covertly, among the small group of disciples. But they will utter his Gospel "in the light", that is, openly; and will proclaim it "upon the housetops" — as Jesus says — that is, publicly.

The second difficulty that Christ's missionaries will encounter is the physical threat against them, that is, direct persecution of them personally, to the point of being killed. This prophesy by Jesus is realized in every age: it is a painful reality, but it attests to the faithfulness of witnesses. How many Christians are persecuted even today throughout the world! They suffer for the Gospel with love, they are martyrs of our days. And we can say with confidence that they are more numerous than those of the earliest times: so many martyrs, just for the fact of being Christians. Jesus advises these disciples of yesterday and today who suffer persecution: "do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (v. 28). We should not allow ourselves to be frightened by those who seek to extinguish evangelizing power with arrogance and violence. Indeed, they can do nothing against the soul, that is, against communion with God: no one can take this away from disciples, because it is a gift from God. The only fear that a disciple should have is that of losing this divine gift,

closeness, friendship with God, giving up living according to the Gospel, thereby acquiring moral death, which is the effect of sin.

Jesus indicates as the third type of test that the Apostles will have to face, the sensation, which some may feel, that God himself has abandoned them, remaining distant and silent. Here too, Jesus exhorts them not to fear, because even while experiencing these and other pitfalls, the life of disciples lies firmly in the hands of God who loves us and looks after us. They are like three temptations: to sugar-coat the Gospel, to water it down; second: persecution; and third: the feeling that God has left us alone. Even Jesus suffered this trial in the Garden of Olives and on the Cross: “Father, why have you *forsaken* me?”, Jesus asks. At times one feels this spiritual barrenness; we must not fear it. The Father takes care of us, because our value is great in His eyes. What matters is frankness, the courage of our witness, our witness of faith: “recognizing Jesus before men” and going forth doing good.

May Mary Most Holy, model of trust and abandonment in God in the hour of adversity and danger, help us never to surrender to despair, but rather always to entrust ourselves to Him and to his grace, because God’s grace is ever more powerful than evil.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday the United Nations celebrated World Refugee Day. The crisis caused by the coronavirus has shed light on the need to ensure necessary protection to refugees too, in order to guarantee their dignity and safety. I invite you to join in my prayer for a renewed and active commitment by all in favour of the effective protection of every human being, in particular of those who are forced to flee due to situations of grave danger to them or to their families.

Another aspect on which the pandemic has led us to reflect is the relationship between mankind and the environment. The lockdown reduced pollution and enabled us to rediscover the beauty of so many places free of traffic and noise. Now, with the resumption of activities, we all must be more responsible for the care of our common home. I appreciate the many initiatives that, in every part of the world, are growing “from the bottom-up” and are moving in this sense. For example, in Rome today there is one dedicated to the Tiber River. But there are so many of them in other places! May they promote a citizenry that is ever more aware of this essential common good.

Today in my homeland and in other places they are celebrating the day dedicated to fathers, to dads. I assure all fathers of my closeness and prayers. We all know that being a dad is not an easy job! That is why we pray for them. I also recall in a special way our fathers who continue to protect us from Heaven.

And I greet all of you, dear faithful people of Rome and pilgrims from various parts of Italy — now we are starting to see them, the pilgrims — and, increasingly, from other countries too. Someone... I see the flags. I greet you young people in particular: Today we recall Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, a young man full of love for God and neighbour; he died very young, here in Rome, because he took care of victims of the plague. I entrust the young people of the entire world to his intercession.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.

Arrivederci!